



TIME

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Great Galloping Galaxies!

By Gerald Clarke

Stop for a minute! Do you really want to know, before you have seen the movie, the answers to some of the most intriguing questions of 1983?

Will Han Solo be freed from the carbonite in which he has been imprisoned?

Will Luke Skywalker at last become a Jedi knight?

Is Darth Vader really Luke's father?

All this, and a bit more, will of necessity be revealed in the following paragraphs. Filmgoers who demand total suspense should now avert their eyes and wait patiently in line Wednesday, May 25, when *Return of the Jedi*, the third of the Star Wars epics, opens in 950 theaters across the U.S. and Canada. Those who think they have already guessed the answers may read on, secure in the knowledge that the real surprises of the movie will not be unveiled in the pages that follow. So get ready for the final picture in George Lucas' marvelous rocket-propelled fairy tale and prepare your eyes for a constellation of special effects, a galaxy of monsters and a small world inhabited by fierce and furry Teddy bears.

It seems almost inevitable that *Return of the Jedi* will be one of this summer's blockbusters. (Other strong entries, including *Superman III*, a computer thriller called *WarGames* and *The Twilight Zone*, based on the old television series, have hopeful studios predicting that this summer's receipts may break last year's \$1.2 billion record.) Star Wars, the first in the series (1977), has taken in \$524 million at box offices around the world, while *The Empire Strikes Back*, the second in the saga (1980), has grossed \$365 million worldwide. And *Empire*, as Lucas himself points out, was not an upbeat picture: it had an ending that left the bad guys in charge, and the good guys on the run—or, in poor Han Solo's case, on ice.

Return of the Jedi completes the trilogy. It is not as exciting as Star Wars itself, which had the advantage of novelty. But it is better and more satisfying than *The Empire Strikes Back*, which suffered from a hectic, muddled pace, together with the classic problems of being the second act in a three-act play. "I think *Jedi* is the best Star Wars movie ever made, and it is definitely going to be the most successful," says Director Steven Spielberg, who as one of Lucas' closest friends is admittedly biased. "The first movie was the introduction; *Empire* was the second-act conflict. But they were mere canapes for this third-act opus. This is the definitive Star Wars."

Produced at a cost of \$32.5 million (compared with more than \$10 million for Star Wars and \$25 million for *Empire*), *Jedi* is more lavish than its predecessors. Star Wars, for example, had about 545 special effects; *The Empire*, 763; *Jedi* has 942. "The effects in this film are more or less the way I wanted them to be in Star Wars, but I didn't have the technology to carry them out," says Lucas. "The space battle is ten times more complicated than the one in Star Wars. If you went back and saw that one after seeing this one, it wouldn't be nearly as exciting as you remembered it." Adds Tom Smith, a vice president at Lucasfilm Ltd.: "I can't think of anything that we know how to do that we didn't do for this movie."

So dim the lights and butter the popcorn. This is, after all, as Lucas keeps reminding us, a popcorn movie.

The maverick space pilot Han Solo (Harrison Ford), still encased in that carbonite, is a wall decoration in the castle of Jabba the Hutt on the desert planet Tatooine. Jabba, a huge, slobbering, sluglike creature resembling a repulsive mixture of Humpty Dumpty and Sydney Greenstreet, is Mr. Big in the galactic underworld. Around him he has assembled the vilest monsters in the universe.

Now, one by one, often in disguise, Han's friends come to rescue him: first that robotic dynamic duo, See-Threepio (C-3PO), the gold-plated neurotic with a proper English accent (Anthony Daniels), and Artoo-Detoo (R2-D2), who looks like a tank-type vacuum cleaner but has the heart of a lion. Then Solo's bearlike copilot Chewbacca, the 7-ft. 5-in. Wookiee; the feisty Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher); and Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams), the smooth-talking leader of The Empire Strikes Back's Cloud City. And finally the hero, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill), who already has many of a Jedi knight's weapons, the mysterious but potent powers of the Force.

Before Han is rescued, there are several close-fought battles, including one with a giant Grendel-like monster in the castle's dungeon, another with Jabba and his minions in antigravity sail barges, floating perilously above the desert pit that holds an other, even more frightening monster. It swallows its victims, and they die ever so painfully during a dinner that lasts a thousand years.

All that is merely preliminary, however, to the real battle between the Rebel Alliance and the corrupt Empire, and to the contest of wills between Luke, the last of the Jedis, and the black-caped, black-masked Darth Vader. Yoda, the 900-year-old Jedi master from The Empire Strikes Back, reappears to confirm what Luke feared most: Darth Vader is indeed his father, a former Jedi knight who was seduced by the evil Emperor and turned to the "dark" side of the Force, to hate rather than to love. Luke will never be a real Jedi, Yoda says, until he has confronted his father. At the end, the Emperor himself, a wizened, glowering old man in a sorcerer's cloak (Ian McDiarmid), watches as father and son struggle with each other. "Kill him," he tells Luke. "Your hate has made you powerful. Now, fulfill your destiny and take your father's place at my side!"

While that is going on aboard the Emperor's Death Star—a souped-up version of the one that Luke destroyed in Star Wars—his friends are confronting legions of imperial storm troopers on the green, forested Moon of Endor, thousands of miles away. Their new allies are a tribe of primitive Ewoks, pugnacious little warriors who look like cuddly Teddy bears but have the combative and fearless temperaments of Yorkshire terriers.

There are dazzling, dizzying chases by flying speeder bikes through dense groves of giant redwood trees and eventually another full-blown space battle, as the ships of the Rebel Alliance try to destroy the Death Star. Is Luke seduced by the dark side of the Force? Does he kill his father? Do the rebels win? Don't ask, but one clue may be allowed. Says Harrison Ford, with some dismay: "George has a predisposition for happy endings."

Taken on its own terms—"Let's face it," says Hamill, "we made a film for children"—Return of the Jedi is a brilliant, imaginative piece of moviemaking. But it does not diminish the accomplishment of Lucas and his youthful team to say that there are flaws nonetheless. The most obvious, ironically, is an overemphasis on effects and a too proud display of odd-looking creatures. Some otherwise breathtaking scenes, such as the visit to Jabba's lair, the hair-raising chases through the redwoods and the climactic space battle, are extended to the point of satiety. The other flaw is the ending: in all three films, Lucas has almost entirely avoided the rank sentimentality to which his story is vulnerable. In the final minutes of Jedi he succumbs, however, and ends his trilogy with one of the corniest conclusions in recent years.

On the other hand, the acting in Jedi is better than it was in the other two. Ford was always good as the likable, daredevil cynic, but Fisher and, most particularly, Hamill have broadened and matured their talents. In his final scenes with Vader, Hamill provides Luke with a hitherto unsuspected depth of personality. Despite its shortcomings, which are relatively minor in context, the film succeeds, passing the one test of all enduring fantasy: it casts a spell and envelops its audience in a magic all its own.

Lucas developed his themes more than ten years ago: the battle between good and evil; the ability of a free-spirited, unsophisticated society to win ultimate victory over a high-tech dictatorship; the power of an individual to prevail against all odds, if he only has faith in himself. "I don't believe it," Luke says in Empire, when Yoda levitates a spaceship. "That," answers Yoda, "is why you fail." It is a complicated universe of the imagination Lucas has laid out to express his themes, and he has tirelessly overseen its evolution, directing the first film himself and assigning the other two to carefully selected subalterns: Irvin Kershner for Empire and Richard Marquand for Jedi.

Marquand, a Welshman who had years of experience directing primarily for British television (*The Search for the Nile*), campaigned for the job and guarded Lucas' creation zealously. Says he: "It is as if Lucas were a famous composer who said to me, 'Here's a 120-piece orchestra. Here's my music. I'd like you to conduct.' " In this maestro's view, Kershner had carelessly strayed from the true faith. Marquand was disturbed to detect that in Empire Artoo-Detoo was occasionally painted with black squares instead of his customary blue, and that Darth Vader sometimes wielded his light-saber with only one hand, like an oldtime Texas sheriff. "Everyone knows that a light-saber is too heavy for one hand," Marquand says indignantly.

Intent on observing what he calls the "etiquette of the saga," he persuaded Lucas to tell him what happened to the characters before Star Wars began and demanded that Lucas always be available by phone, so that he could find out how a character should look or think in Lucas' universe. "I acted as the ultimate source," explains Lucas. "I was the only one that had the whole vision."

Marquand did not always have to phone for answers: Lucas, whose official title was executive producer, was on the set something like 60% of the time, far more than he had been during the shooting of Empire. Yet, according to both men, there was rarely a conflict and only occasional confusion. "Only once did I get conflicting directions," recalls Fisher. "When I came into Jabba's throne room disguised as a man, Richard told me to stand like an English sentry. Then George walked in and said, 'Carrie, you're standing like an English sentry. You want to be more swashbuckling.' "

Lucas was particularly demanding with the people who created the creatures and the special effects, and often changed his mind. Makeup and Creature Designers Stuart Freeborn, who made the ape costumes in 2001: A Space Odyssey, and Phil Tippett always started with clay models that could be recast over and over again. The mold for the sprawling Jabba took two tons of clay and was so big that no oven could hold it; an entire room had to be turned into a Jabba bakery.

At one time or another, Jedi called upon the talents of dozens of dwarfs and midgets in Britain, where the interiors were shot. The Teddy bear warriors alone required 40 of the

"little people." Costumes were fitted, and several of the female Ewoks even cuddled baby Ewoks, cunningly designed hand puppets. Kenny Baker, the man who has propelled Artoo-Detoo through his more complicated maneuvers—at times Artoo-Detoo was a real machine—doubled as an Ewok and recruited his wife into the Ewok tribe as well. "Since most of the Ewoks live in trees, we had to find a good number of dwarfs and midgets who could do stunts," says Freeborn. "One even had a black belt in karate."

Sound Designer Ben Burtt devised a new language for the Ewoks, as he did for all the creatures with speaking parts. Ewokese, for example, is a combination of five tongues, including Mongolian, Tibetan and Nepali. All were garbled together in Burtt's sound mixer. When it came time to compose an Ewokese anthem, Burtt could do it without the mixer. "By that time," he jokes, "I could speak Ewokese myself."

A quarter of Jedi's budget, \$8 million, went into special effects, most of which were shot at Industrial Light and Magic, a division of Lucasfilm, in Marin County, across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. The model shop made everything from the Death Star to Han Solo's saucer-shaped Millennium Falcon, and the optical department made its models look as if they were both big and in movement. Most of the flying objects in Jedi were really stationary, and the camera did all the moving.

The speeder-bike chases through the redwoods were an example. To give the illusion of speed, a cameraman walked through a forest near Crescent City, Calif, while the camera strapped to his chest ran film at one-thirtieth its normal speed. When that film was put into a projector at regular speed, the cameraman's stroll became a hair-raising 150-m.p.h. race between the experienced storm troopers and the amateur rebels.

The scenes in space were the product of highly advanced matte photography. One element of a scene, an imperial battle cruiser, for instance, would be shot. Then another element, like a rebel fighter, would be photographed and superimposed on it, as if it were another layer on a cake. Some of the shots in the final space battle had 67 such layers, one on top of the other. Says Art Director Joe Johnston: "We have to make each film better than the one previous. The public demands a special-effects extravaganza, something that will blow them away for their five dollars. We were never sure whether the movie was a vehicle for the effects or for the story."

Acting in the Star Wars epics has made the leads rich, famous and impatient to do other things. "Seven years is a long time," says Fisher, 26. "I was 19 when I did the first movie and 25 when I did the last one. I grew up on these films. They were my college in space." Tired of playing "a princess with a beef," as she calls the lovely Leia, Fisher asked that she be given an extra dimension in Jedi. Lucas acceded, in a manner of speaking. In one scene with Jabba, Lucas took off her bulky space outfit and put her into a belly dancer's costume. Says she: "I then wanted to say, 'Would you look at what they're making me wear?' "

Hamill, 31, is trying to relieve his Star Wars frustrations on the stage. He has been playing the part of Mozart in Amadeus for 5½ months, first on tour and now on Broadway. Like all the other actors, Hamill is devoted to Lucas, but he admits that "these movies didn't give me much pride in my craft. I had to act onstage to get that. Special-effects movies are hard on actors. You find yourself giving an impassioned speech to a big lobster in a flight suit. Only later do you see how silly it looks."

Hamill has turned down roles similar to that of Luke, but finds that producers do not consider him for character parts he seeks, such as that of the fanatic cyclist in *Breaking Away*. Like many actors who have become famous playing one character, he has stepped into a kind of prison. Now, he says, "I'm relieved and excited that this is the end." But Hamill, says Lucas, is "going to have to play Luke Skywalker characters for a long time, just as Harrison played so many semi-Han Solo parts. Mark's a very good actor. Eventually people will realize that he can do something else."

Ford, 40, is the only one to break out of his Star Wars mold, and that is only because he won the role of Indiana Jones in another Lucas-inspired film, Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Star Wars gave him visibility, but *Raiders* made him a box-office draw. "People want fairy tales in their lives, and I'm lucky enough to provide them," Ford says with a touch of cynicism. "There is no difference between doing this kind of film and playing King Lear. The actor's job is exactly the same: dress up and pretend." Nonetheless, he wanted Han to do something different in *Jedi*, and that was to die. "I thought it would give the myth some body. Han Solo really had no place to go. He's got no papa, he's got no mamma, he's got no story. But that was the one thing I was unable to convince George of."

Of course not. Though Lucas has no immediate plans for Han, Leia or Luke, that does not mean he will not come up with some in the next decade or so. If he does carry the story any further, he will probably go back to the beginning, before these characters were born, and make what he calls a "prequel," another trilogy that would explain how the Republic fell. Only after that—and certainly not before the 1990s—would he do the sequel and show what happens to the Star Wars trio after *Jedi*. But at the moment the only words he likes to think about are *The End*. "I look upon the three Star Wars films as chapters in one book," he says. "Now the book is finished, and I have put it on the shelf."

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